

CHAPTER V THE ASPIRANT SOWS WILD OATS

The fifth chapter deals with one of the subordinate cycles or the experiences of that which is almost the self, namely, the false-self. This false-self is higher and more intelligently directed than the habit nature or the simple reflex shadow-self which takes control in later chapters. Nevertheless, the self has lost its dominion over the body and is represented by the false-self.

The false-self has no sense of responsibility. It is through the false-self that the ego gains its grossest experiences. So here is the first complete plunge into experience or that which in ordinary life is known as the sowing of wild oats. Humanity has recognized this tendency in its mass expression represented in the extremism of our jazz age. Appetite, passion and aspiration are all the same thing. There is no difference between a gross appetite and a high spiritual aspiration except in the field of its activity. Physiologically, psychologically and spiritually it is the same force and the same urge. The race gains its aspiration through its troubles. The sowing of wild oats is not a necessary process as a cosmic requirement but in the average human being the experience is very necessary because the average human being dodges intensity. The purpose of the sowing of wild oats is to create that condition of intensity which promotes growth.

The self in its pride forfeited its consciousness. In its pride it cut off its consciousness and the consciousness descended to the next center. When the higher nature is unable to continue its consciousness in the experiences of life it loses consciousness and the consciousness descends to the next center. Here it is the emotional nature. The false-self comes into control of the body without any background of experience and immediately sets out to express itself. Consciousness is a substance but is always an essence that is drawn out of experience. As soon as a man gains responsibility he commences to change things. Any individual going into a new experience must stamp that experience with its personality.

The false-self takes every sense through its lower expression and stretches it to its limit of endurance. The ecstasy of the sun is the ecstasy of the will; of the moon, the feelings; of Venus, appetites; of Jupiter, growth; of Mars, force; of Mercury, the inception of things; of Saturn, the sense of knowing all the time it is plunging into dissipation and damning its eternal soul or creating that super-ecstasy and that sooner or later it will start uphill again. Any person seeking expression in any field up to the point of that first super-ecstasy can indulge in almost anything without karmic results. To that extent the sowing of wild oats is harmless.

Every human being does a certain amount of dabbling and experimenting with the vices of life. As long as the impulse is pure, experimentation results in no great harm. But when the false-self carried these things to a point where they were etched upon the whole life then the trouble began.

If one feels that a given act is good and goes ahead and does it and it turns out to be evil, there is engendered nothing but the physical karma that is fairly easy to work out. But when the aspirant gets to that point where he debates within himself whether or not a given act is good or evil, then he brings down upon himself a great deal of spiritual karma when he acts. These are the bitterest lessons he has to learn. The person who debates his temptations with himself by that mere act is shutting out the higher inspirations and intuitions.

The physical ecstasy or the burning out of the fuse is the safety valve of the false-self. It is that thing that stops the whirling vortices in a center and permits the ego to come in. When the self again and again allows the false-self to return for recapitulatory cycles, the lessons become more and more bitter.

CHAPTER VI THE EPISODE OF DEGENERACY

In the sixth chapter the shadow-self is introduced. The three selves are identified as kings and are in direct correspondence to the three principal centers. Cyrus is a fourth or last self, or the initiate consciousness only touched incidentally in the tenth chapter. The head is the center representing the self, the throat the false-self and the navel the shadow-self. Here are Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius respectively.

This chapter does not deal with deliberate evil-doing but with an episode of perfect crystallization or a perfect immersing in form and experience.

A curious transposition takes place in the descent to the navel. The false-self or throat center has notions of its own and despises and abuses its own nature but the shadow-self or the habit nature is inherently just and so here does everything in its power to work things out in a just and equitable manner.

The habit nature demonstrates the two extremes which people take. The one extreme despises anything which is a habit and tries to break up all habits. Yet a person with no habits is completely unsettled and of very little use in the world. The other extreme is to deify the habits. Even spiritual development is thus supposed to become a habit.

The virtue of a habit is in its making but when it becomes crystallized the virtue lies in its breaking. The making of a habit even though it be evil is virtuous because it results in growth. Sooner or later, in another life if not in this, fate or karmawill draw a valuable essence from it and then require its breaking. Life is the successive breaking of old habits and the making of new ones. The strongest man is the one who can do everything with ease and smoothness of a habit and yet truly be without habits. He has not the limiting habits but the skill which is the highest aspect of the habit nature.

The first cycle of individuality brings the self into responsible consciousness, the second the false-self and the third the shadow-self presented in this chapter.

The habit nature places everything on an astrological basis. The ordinary astrological chart may be read with perfect accuracy if the person lives a crystallized life. To the degree that a person rises above the ordinary crystallized state of being he rises above the horoscope. The natural person receives the impact of the planetary natures as distributed in the earth's astral sphere, but the trained person enlarges his own individual sphere so that in effect he redistributes all cosmic impulse and creates his own astrological universe or his own directions and his own transits.

An assignment of the ordinary astrological wheel is made by the shadow-self, figuratively speaking, and to each house is given a nature. The houses are geometrically arranged in co-operation with each other so that the actions are determined by the quadratures (cardinal, fixed and common signs; angular, succedent and cadent houses). Of the three groups of houses in the chart the angles seem to rule the